



# Modern Sufism by Buya Hamka: The Relevance of Spirituality for Generation Z Students

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## Abstract

Modern Sufism by Buya Hamka is a human effort to reflect within oneself, cleanse the soul, and train it through various forms of spiritual discipline. This study aims to identify the values and life lessons from Buya Hamka's thoughts that are relevant for Generation Z students in facing the challenges of modern life. This study uses a literature review method with a literature review approach, namely examining articles, written works, and literature related to the concept of modern Sufism by Buya Hamka. The results of the study indicate that the thoughts of modern Sufism by Buya Hamka can be implemented in real terms by Generation Z students, especially in building character, controlling themselves from the negative influences of globalization, and fostering spiritual awareness that impacts life balance. Thus, modern Sufism by Buya Hamka makes an important contribution in shaping the personality of students who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also spiritually and morally mature.

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## INTRODUCTION

Amidst the increasingly complex dynamics of modern life, Generation Z faces unprecedented challenges and opportunities. In this context, spiritual and philosophical thought becomes highly relevant as a guide to finding meaning and purpose in life. One figure with profound thoughts on spirituality and Sufism is Buya Hamka, a prominent Indonesian cleric, writer, and thinker. Through his works, Buya Hamka offers insights that are not only relevant to his time but can also inspire Generation Z students in navigating the challenges of life.

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Generation Z students are a group of students born between 1997 and the early 2010s. They grew up in a digital era that is highly connected and open to technology, social media, and information. Characteristics of this generation generally include the ability to adapt to technology, high social awareness, and a tendency to seek meaning and value in everyday experiences. Generation Z students, despite having many positive potentials, also face challenges that can lead to moral deviations. Some moral deviations that sometimes appear in this generation are influenced by technological advances, social pressures, and modern lifestyles. Generation Z often spends a lot of time on social media, which can cause several moral problems, such as focusing too much on the self-image displayed online, compared to one's true values or qualities. This can also lead to narcissism, a tendency to seek external validation, and showing off behavior to get excessive attention or "likes". Not only that, there are many other examples of moral deviations that often occur in Generation Z students, such as: (1) Free Association: Premarital sex, drug use, and alcohol. (2) Violence: Bullying, brawls, and dating violence. (3) Technology Abuse: Addiction to online games, pornography, and the spread of hoaxes. (4) Lack of Respect: Not respecting parents, teachers, and elders. (5) Extreme Individualism: Prioritizing personal interests over common interests.

Therefore, this article will delve into Buya Hamka's modern Sufi thought and explore how the spiritual principles he taught can serve as valuable guidance for Generation Z students navigating the dynamics of modern life. By understanding the essence of Sufism emphasized by Hamka, students can find peace and meaning in life, and develop wiser and more resilient characters in navigating the challenges of the contemporary era.

## METHODS

This study uses a literature review method. Data sources are taken from articles related to Buya Hamka's modern Sufism and also related to generation Z students using traditional literature review techniques. The selected articles have met the criteria for good articles, in other words, these articles are able to meet article quality standards such as being well written, factually accurate, and verifiable, having a broad scope, neutral, stable, and equipped with illustrations in the form of appropriate and licensed images (Suparno & Thamrin, 2021).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Buya Hamka's Concept of Modern Sufism

Through his two works *modern Sufism* and *development and purification of Sufism* Hamka is considered the initiator and spokesperson for modern Sufism (1939). He distanced himself from anti-modern Sufi statements by criticizing Sufism as contradictory to Islamic practice. This contribution also established him as a moderate intellectual and led to his appointment as chairman. *Council of Islamic Scholar Of Indonesia* (MUI). Regarding the concept of modern Sufism initiated by Hamka, it not only takes the form of social and spiritual piety but also aligns it with the corridors of religious law. Hamka explained that Sufism is *Syifa'ul Qalbi* which is a medicine to cleanse the heart, cleanse the character from reprehensible behaviors, and then adorn oneself with praiseworthy behaviors. (Fahru, 2020)

According to Supriyadi & Jannah (2019), the use of the term Sufism, suffixed with the word "modern," is actually inseparable from Hamka's closeness to Muhammadiyah as a renewal movement. Hamka's interest in presenting the concept of modern Sufism is in opposition to the term "traditional Sufism." The Sufism offered by Hamka is based on the principle of monotheism, not the search for mukasyafah experience. His Sufism path is built through an attitude of asceticism that can be felt through formal worship. Appreciation is in the form of practicing

piety, not a desire for unity with God. Hamka's reflection of modern Sufism, in the form of socio-religious sensitivity (social religion), is not because of the desire to obtain *karamah* (sacredness) that is magical and metaphysical.

The existence of modern Sufism is solely to uphold human character that is compatible with the balanced Islamic character in the term Hamka "*i'tidal*", namely humans in life as a process of forming good character, avoiding evil character and mental illness or mental illness.

Hamka's modern Sufism path is a human effort to reflect within oneself. Cleanse oneself and train oneself with various kinds of exercises (*riadhatun nafis*), so that over time the veil of self is lifted and a brilliant light emerges. Hamka also emphasized the importance of spiritual life, namely the realization that this world is not merely composed of objects. This spiritual establishment is a form of sincere human recognition of divine power, thus fostering a dynamic and fiery spirit and leading to the emergence of sincerity and honesty within humans. (Supriyadi & Jannah, 2019).

### **The Relevance of Buya Hamka's Modern Sufism to the Lives of Generation Z Students**

Buya Hamka's modern Sufism is strongly relevant to the lives of Generation Z students, particularly in helping them navigate the challenges and complexities of the digital era, social pressures, and the need for balance between worldly and spiritual life. Buya Hamka successfully packaged Sufism teachings in a practical and understandable way, enabling them to be applied in the context of modern life. Here are some examples of the relevance of Buya Hamka's modern Sufism to the lives of Generation Z students:

1. Helping You Find Inner Peace Amidst Modern Pressures

Generation Z students live in a rapidly changing world, with high academic, social, and technological pressures. In Buya Hamka's thinking, Sufism teaches the importance of inner peace through closeness to God and self-control. These teachings can help Generation Z avoid the excessive anxiety, stress, or identity confusion that often arise from the pressures of modern life. Buya Hamka emphasizes the importance of introspection and reflection so that individuals can better understand themselves and find true inner peace. (Arrasyid, 2020)

2. Becoming the Foundation for Self-Development for a Better Personality

Buya Hamka described Sufism as a path to becoming a better person (Azizah & Jannah, 2022). In the lives of Generation Z students, modern Sufism can be applied as a foundation for self-development, encouraging students to continually improve their morals and cultivate positive attitudes such as honesty, sincerity, and patience. Sufism teaches that one must continually strive to control one's desires and eliminate negative traits such as envy, anger, and arrogance. Generation Z, living in a competitive environment, will find it helpful to remain humble and focus on self-development rather than getting caught up in social comparisons.

3. Teaching a Simple Life in a Consumerist Lifestyle

Buya Hamka, through Sufism, taught the importance of living simply and not being bound by excessive material desires. Generation Z students are highly susceptible to consumerist lifestyles, particularly due to exposure to social media that emphasizes luxury and material achievement. By understanding Buya Hamka's Sufism teachings, Generation Z can learn to maintain simplicity in life and avoid harmful consumerist or hedonistic behavior. Sufism encourages them to focus on more meaningful things, such as knowledge, good deeds, and morals.

4. Increasing Social Awareness and Concern

Sufism also teaches the importance of caring for others and society. Buya Hamka encouraged Sufis to show empathy and actively participate in social activities as part of their religious obligations. Generation Z students can utilize these teachings to become more aware of social issues, contribute to their communities, and incorporate social activities into their life values. This will help them focus not only on personal achievement but also on becoming caring individuals who positively impact their surroundings.

5. Encouraging Students to Prioritize Sincerity in Learning and Creating

Buya Hamka taught that every action must be based on sincerity or good intentions (Nufus, 2021). In the lives of Generation Z students, this principle is crucial, as they often become trapped by external motivations such as popularity or social validation from social media. Sufism teaches us to do everything with sincerity and not seek praise. This encourages students to study and work hard not merely for recognition, but to gain beneficial knowledge and God's blessing.

6. Building Mental Resilience Amidst Social Media Pressure

Generation Z grew up in the digital age and is highly familiar with social media, which often brings pressure to appear perfect or achieve immediate success. Buya Hamka's thoughts in modern Sufism teach self-control and maintaining a balance between the real world and spiritual needs (Muvid & Aliyah, 2020). With Sufism principles, Generation Z students can learn to be less concerned with the views or judgments of others on social media and focus more on meaningful personal achievements aligned with spiritual values.

7. Reducing the Tendency of Unethical Pragmatic Behavior

One of the challenges facing Generation Z is the tendency to be pragmatist or prioritize quick ways to achieve goals, which sometimes leads to unethical behavior, such as cheating or data manipulation. Buya Hamka emphasized that Sufism is a path to honesty and integrity. Sufism teachings can help Generation Z students remain steadfast in ethical values and honesty, even in situations that demand quick results or high pressure.

8. Giving Life a Deeper Meaning in the Midst of Modern Life, Which Tends to be Shallow

Buya Hamka views Sufism as a path to discovering a deeper meaning in life, beyond simply pursuing material things or popularity. Amidst modern life, which can sometimes be shallow or overly focused on worldly achievements, Generation Z students can explore a higher meaning through Sufism, such as drawing closer to God, improving relationships with others, and seeking God's pleasure in all they do. This will help them live a more peaceful and purposeful life.

9. Strengthening Mental Health Through Spiritual Closeness

Modern Sufism, according to Buya Hamka, emphasizes the importance of building spiritual closeness to achieve peace of mind (Nufus, 2021). In the context of Generation Z students, who often face mental and emotional stress, Sufism can serve as a "spiritual therapy" that strengthens mental health. Through practices such as introspection, dhikr (remembrance of God), and prayer, students can feel calmer, more stable, and able to face life's challenges in a healthy manner.

10. Teaching the True Meaning of Happiness

Buya Hamka argued that true happiness does not come from material achievement or status, but from inner peace and closeness to God. This teaching is particularly relevant for Generation Z students, who often feel

empty or dissatisfied despite achieving much materially. Modern Sufism helps them find a deeper happiness, one that is less dependent on worldly things and more oriented toward inner satisfaction and a good relationship with God and others. (Ihsan & Alfiansyah, 2021)

By following the teachings of modern Sufism by Buya Hamka, Generation Z students can develop personalities that are not only worldly achievers but also spiritually and mentally rich. Sufism provides relevant guidance for them to live more balanced, meaningful lives, and in accordance with noble values.

### **Examples of Buya Hamka's Teachings That Can Be Implemented in Daily Life for Generation Z Students**

The following are some examples of Buya Hamka's teachings that Generation Z students can implement in their daily lives:

#### **1. Prioritizing Sincerity in Studying and Working**

Buya Hamka emphasized the importance of sincerity in all things, whether in worship, work, or learning. According to Buya Hamka, sincerity means doing something selflessly and without expecting anything in return or praise from others. (Nurhadi & Rozi, 2020).

Generation Z students can apply this sincerity to their studies, with the primary goal of pursuing knowledge for its benefits to themselves and others, rather than solely for high grades or recognition. For example, when working on assignments or exams, they can focus on understanding the material and the quality of their work without overly worrying about external assessments. This sincere attitude helps reduce social pressure and keeps them away from unethical practices, such as cheating or copying assignments.

#### **2. Maintaining Simplicity in Lifestyle and Production**

In Modern Sufism, Buya Hamka advocates a simple life and moderation in worldly affairs. Simplicity does not mean deprivation, but rather prioritizing basic needs and avoiding unnecessary desires. He believes that simplicity will bring peace and keep one away from greed and waste. (Amir & Maksum, 2021).

In an era of social media that often emphasizes luxury and material achievement, students can apply this teaching by adjusting their lifestyle to their needs, rather than simply following trends. For example, they can learn to create a wise budget, prioritize purchases of truly necessary items, and avoid consumerist habits that often arise from social pressure or the desire to appear "cool" on social media. Modesty can also be applied to maintaining social relationships and avoiding judging others solely on material possessions.

#### **3. Practicing Patience and Self-Control in Facing Challenges**

Buya Hamka taught that patience is one of the foundations of Sufism. Patience encompasses the ability to control emotions, resist anger, and remain calm when facing difficulties. For him, self-control is the greatest form of jihad, namely, fighting against desires that can harm oneself and others.

College students often experience stress due to academic, social, or personal pressures. In situations like these, they can remember Buya Hamka's teachings of patience to remain calm and control their emotions. For example, when frustrated with exam results or friendship issues, students can choose to calm down, introspect, and refrain from immediately reacting emotionally, either in the real world or on social media. This practice of

patience will help them become wiser and more mature individuals in facing life's challenges.

4. Cultivating Empathy and Social Concern

Buya Hamka strongly emphasized the importance of doing good to others and caring about the social conditions around him. In his view, a true Muslim is one who focuses not only on his vertical relationship with God but also on horizontal relationships with other human beings. He believed that everyone has a social responsibility to help those in need. (Azizah & Jannah, 2022).

Students can demonstrate empathy by becoming more active in social activities or campus organizations aimed at helping the community. They can also demonstrate compassion by helping friends in need, donating time or energy to volunteer activities, or even simply sharing useful information with their peers. This empathy also includes a willingness to listen and understand others' perspectives, thus fostering more positive social relationships among students.

5. Conducting Self-Introspection (Muhasabah) Regularly

Buya Hamka emphasized the importance of muhasabah, or self-introspection, as a way to improve oneself and draw closer to God. In Sufism, introspection is the process of assessing and correcting oneself to stay on the right path and avoid harmful behavior. (Azizah & Jannah, 2022).

Amidst the busy schedule of lectures and other activities, students can set aside time for regular self-reflection, for example every evening or weekend. They can reflect on the actions or decisions they have taken, consider areas for improvement, and evaluate whether their daily lives align with their long-term goals and personal values. By engaging in self-reflection, students will become more aware of their actions, wiser in their decision-making, and more open to improving their shortcomings.

6. Building True Happiness Through Closeness to God

According to Buya Hamka, true happiness doesn't come from material achievement or popularity, but from closeness to God. This happiness is reflected in inner peace, gratitude, and the ability to accept what is there with sincerity. (Arrasyid, 2020).

Generation Z students can build true happiness by strengthening the spiritual aspects of their lives, such as increasing their devotions, prayer, or activities that bring them closer to God. They can also practice being grateful for what they have, rather than constantly feeling inadequate or envious of others' achievements. This attitude will help them find inner happiness that doesn't depend on worldly achievements or the recognition of others.

7. Maintaining Integrity and Avoiding Unethical Behavior

Buya Hamka always emphasized the importance of integrity and honesty as part of good morals. For him, integrity is the foundation that makes someone trustworthy and respected by others.

In academic life, maintaining integrity means not cheating, not plagiarizing, and always striving to do one's best in an honest manner. Generation Z students can use this value of honesty as a guideline in every aspect of their lives, both in their studies and in their personal lives. Maintaining integrity also includes keeping promises, avoiding gossip, and always speaking honestly. With integrity, they will build trust with others and become respected individuals.

8. Make Good Use of Time (Avoid Wasting Time)

Buya Hamka taught the importance of valuing time as a gift from God. According to Sufism, time is a trust that must be used optimally for

beneficial purposes. Wasting time is a detrimental habit, and using it productively is a manifestation of spiritual awareness. (Fahru, 2020).

Generation Z students can apply this by maintaining a balanced schedule between academics, organizational activities, and personal time. Avoiding excessive time on unproductive activities, such as spending too much time on social media or playing games, is a simple way to apply this principle. They can create a daily priority list, participate in value-added activities, or learn new skills that can improve their quality of life.

Through the examples above, Buya Hamka's teachings in modern Sufism can be a practical and relevant guide for Generation Z students. By applying them in their daily lives, they can live a more meaningful, dignified, and balanced life between worldly and spiritual needs.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation in the research, it can be concluded that Hamka's modern Sufism is a human effort to reflect on oneself. Cleanse oneself and train it with various kinds of exercises (*riadhatun nafs*), so that over time the veil of self is increasingly opened and a brilliant light emerges. Hamka also emphasized that spiritual life, namely the realization, that this world is not solely composed of objects. This spiritual establishment is a form of sincere human recognition of Divine power, thereby fostering a dynamic and fiery spirit and causing the emergence of sincerity and honesty in humans. By following the teachings of modern Sufism Buya Hamka, Generation Z students can develop individuals who are not only accomplished in worldly matters, but also rich spiritually and mentally. Sufism provides relevant guidance for them to live a more balanced, meaningful life, and in accordance with noble values. And through the examples above, Buya Hamka's teachings in modern Sufism can be a practical and relevant guide for Generation Z students. By applying them in their daily lives, they can live a more meaningful, dignified life, and a balance between worldly and spiritual needs.

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